Freedom for Political Prisoners!

Newsletter dedicated to Belarusian political prisoners

Are the authorities planning to release Zmitser Dashkievich?



The wife of a political prisoner believes that the authorities are preparing preventive supervision over him.

Employees of the Pershamajski police department called **Anastasija Dashkievich** and her father today, asking if they would object if Dzmitry Dashkievich lived with them. Young Front leader's wife informed about it via her Facebook account.

"They called from Pershamajski PD and asked my father and then me if we would object if Dzmitry Dashkievich lived with us. Fantastic!", – she wrote.

This phone does not leave a doubt that prison is preparing document for establishing surveillance over the political prisoner. For how long it will be established, it is not clear.

"The essence of non-exoneration is that if Dzmitry Dashkievich, who has been in prison since 19 December 2010, is to be realeased in due time, which I really hope for, he will be under surveillance and their control", – she writes. This means that the political prisoner will not be allowed to leave the country. He will be unable to leave Minsk without being granted an allowance from the authorities.

On March 24, 2011 Zmitser Dashkievich was sentenced to two years in a penal colony. He was detained on December 18, 2010 in Minsk, a day before the presidential elections. Allegedly he and Eduard Lobau beat Kanstancin Savitski and Aleh Malyshau in a courtyard of a block of flats in Janka Bryl Street. Dashkievich and Lobau's detention was a preventive measure, taken by police on the eve of the presidential elections that took place on the following day. On August 28, 2012, Dashkievich was sentenced to another year in prison for "malicious insubordination."

Baltics and Germany call on Belarus to release political prisoners

Baltics and Germany call on Ukraine to continue reforms and demand prisoner release in Belarus.

During the meeting in Kaunas, the second largest city in Lithuania, the Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian and German foreign ministers expressed support for the Eastern Partnership program aimed at bringing six post-Soviet countries closer to the EU. The programme is one of the priorities of the upcoming Lithuanian EU presidency, as ru.delfi.lt writes. The meeting took place on June 21.

In a joint statement issued after the meeting, the ministers "expressed their commitment" to the signing of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, at the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius, provided that Ukrainian authorities take necessary steps demanded by the EU.

The EU calls Kiev to break with "selective judiciary system" – which is a term used to describe the persecution of the opposition and, above all, the arrest of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. As well as to eliminate drawbacks of the election process and implement other reforms defined by the agreed Association agenda.

"The Ministers acknowledged the progress that was being made by Ukraine so far and encouraged Ukraine to take further steps," statement said..

The four ministers also agreed on "the need to maintain engagement with Belarus in the multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership."

As it May be read in a statement: "It is reiterated that all political prisoners need to be released and rehabilitated in order to positively review EU policies with regard to Belarus." The statement was signed by the Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian and German Foreign Ministers – Linas Linkevičius, Urmas Paet, Edgars Rinkevics and Guido Westerwelle.

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Jacek Saryusz – Wolski: The situation of political prisoners in Belarus is pivotal



Until the release and rehabilitation of political prisoners in Belarus, there can be no normalization of relations between Brussels and Minsk. Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, member of the Delegation for relations with Belarus and Vice-Chair of the Euronest Assembly gave an exclusive interview to Palitviazni.info.

Jacek Saryusz – Wolski: *The situation of political prisoners in Belarus is indeed pivotal. The Belarusian authorities should not wait until Europe opens its doors, and starts a dialogue with them. Official contacts between Minsk and Brussels will not exist until the political prisoners are not released. Not only the release of political prisoners will be a trigger of changes, they also have to be fully rehabilitated.*

- How often European Parliament makes Minsk to realize it?

Jacek Saryusz – Wolski: *Currently, European Parliament does not have any contacts with the authorities of Belarus. It is expected that the November summit of the Eastern Partnership in Vilnius will be attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Uladzimir Makey. Currently, the only contacts are made at the level of the embassy in Minsk. The Belarusian authorities are well aware about our position. It was presented more than once by the European Commission and the European Parliament, albeit unilaterally.*

- Would you say that the current initiative to develop relations with the European Union is on the side of Belarus? Is freezing sanctions against Belarusian foreign minister a proof of that fact? Do you expect the Belarusian authorities to release political prisoners in return?

Jacek Saryusz – Wolski: *We've been waiting quite a long time for such a move on the part of Minsk. Freezing sanctions against Makey does not mean we have changed our expectations. The release of all political prisoners is the main point. As for sanctions, it's just a technical move. For some reasons we cannot have a direct, proper and fruitful dialogue with the authorities of that country. But even in the days when Sergei Martynov was Foreign Minister, it was a general practice in the European Union to have contacts at this level. To sum up, the sanctions were suspended not against a man – Vladimir Makey, but against an official, who serves as an intermediary in implementation of claims and establishing proper dialogue. Will it deliver results, will the political prisoners be released? We do want it, it is an ultimate aim. So far, we see that the situation of human rights does not change, and is even getting worse.*

Political prisoner Ihar Alinevich met with his parents

Ihar Alinevich, serving his sentence in Novopolotsk colony No. 10, was allowed to meet briefly with his family.

Charter97.org was informed about the meeting by the mother of political prisoner, **Valentina Alinevich**.

"Together with my husband we visited Ihar. In the prisons with strict discipline such meetings are allowed three times a year. We were talking on the phone, through the glass. Son looked healthy, although his cheeks were sunken – 20 days spent in solitary confinement were visible. I would say that his spirit has remained steadfast, and a sense of humor, such as always", – says the mother of a political prisoner.

She also noted that it was possible to pass Ihar a package.

"Amazingly, there were no problems with passing the package. They took everything except dried mushrooms, shaving foam and nail clippers. These things are apparently forbidden. We brought Ihar sausages but he refused to take it as he is trying not to eat meat", – concluded Valentine Alinevich.

Two months ago in Russia was published the book by Ihar I'm going to Magadan, which tells the story of his arrest in Moscow and about the months spent in the KGB detention center.

On May 27, 2011, the judge Zhanna Chwojnicka sentenced Ihar Alinevich to 8 years of imprisonment in a maximum security penal colony. Currently, he is serving a sentence in Novopolotsk Penal Colony No. 10, which is known for its particularly bad conditions of detention. He and Mikola Dziadok and Alexander Franckievich were accused of attacking the building of the Ministry of Defense, the "Shangri La"casino, and Okrestina detention center, and setting fire to the door of the building of Belarusbank.



What is solidarity? Interview with Polish MP Robert Tyszkiewicz



Information campaigns, actions, support – measures taken by civil society to express support for political prisoners in Belarus. And what kind of other resources are needed? What did Polish politicians in Soviet times, when in this currently democratic country, political prisoners sat in jails? For this and other questions raised by Palitviazni.info answers Robert Tyszkiewicz, Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Sejm, head of the parliamentary group on Belarus.

Robert Tyszkiewicz: *For political prisoners was important the expression of solidarity, even in, as it would seem, the least important issues. First of all, the solidarity was expressed in the interest taken in the fate of the family of political prisoner. Legal and material aid! Therefore, it is important that a prisoner isolated from the world feels that his family is not left to its fate, that his loved ones are all right. And that's the main thing. Another important aspect is political solidarity and support. I am referring to various publications, actions, demands of release. In spite of the isolation, information on such activities reach prisoners and serve as a powerful support to his morale and attitude. And the last but not least is international support. The pressure on the authorities to release political prisoners. It's part of our Polish experience, but now it's an international issue, concerning any country, any prisoner, including Belarus.*

- How often the Belarusian question is raised in the Polish parliament, is the situation of political prisoners in Belarus discussed and in what way the Polish Sejm may put pressure on the authorities of Belarus for the release of prisoners of conscience?

Robert Tyszkiewicz: *In fact, I make effort to talk in Sejm about the Belarusian question as often as possible. All legislative instruments, including statements are issued at the times of incidents, that the Parliament cannot ignore. This happens on a daily basis. We work with various parties in order to create a true fraction, a majority in order to simplify decision-making concerning the aid to the Belarusian civil society, mainly to victims of political persecution. Generally, the efforts of the Parliamentary Committees are aimed at keeping the subject of political prisoners in the foreground of interest. In addition, we often talk about the human rights situation with our foreign partners. Recently we conducted such talks with the representatives of the French parliament. We have involved the French in the issue of political prisoners in Belarus. Such efforts are necessary for Europe to talk about the inadmissibility of persecution with one voice.*

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Jacek Protasiewicz: The European Union hopes for the release of political prisoners



Vice-President of the European Parliament, Jacek Protasiewicz expressed confidence that now it is a time for the Belarusian officials to take steps necessary for the improvement of relations between the EU and Minsk. Above all, Belarusian authorities should free political prisoners. Minsk does not have time to spare to do that. The politician told to Palitviazni.info about the EU expectations.

- Has the position of the European Union on the existence of political prisoners in Belarus changed in recent years?

Jacek Protasiewicz: *Absolutely not! We still demand from Minsk release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners!*

- How often the subject of political prisoners is broached in the European Union?

Jacek Protasiewicz: *Lately this topic has become very current. Only last week the Subcommittee on Human Rights held the meeting in the European Parliament. The discussion was focused mainly on political prisoners in Belarus. In addition, I met with a representative of the Human Rights Center Viasna. I received a full report on the situation of human rights in Belarus.I personally passed this document to Stavros Lambrinidis, the European Union's Special Representative for Human Rights. I will add, that me and my colleagues discussed the political situation in Belarus, and of course the issue of political prisoners, during the meeting of the European Parliament delegation for relations with Belarus, held last week. It's just a short report on what is already done. And further, we plan to return to the topic of Belarusian prisoners of conscience during the examination of the report of MEP Justas Paletskis. Soon there should be organized the vote related to this document. I would add that after the changes introduced to the report, the issue of political prisoners became the key subject!*

- Belarusian Foreign Minister, Uladzimir Makey was granted the right of entry to the European Union. Will the EU representatives directly request from Mr. Makey the release of political prisoners?

Jacek Protasiewicz: *The decision to lift some sanctions imposed on the minister Makey was made in order to facilitate the talks at a higher political level, which is represented by the minister. The result of these discussions should be the decision of the official Minsk to release political prisoners. Only then we can talk about withdrawal of sanctions.*

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Ales Bialiatski wrote a memoir about the events related to his arrest

3The works on a series of memories by chair of Viasna Ales Bialiatski, that are related to his arrest in 2011 are coming to an end.

Human rights activist **Yelena Laptenok** from Viasna informed Radio Svaboda:

"These are the memories, reflections and objective analysis of events prior to his arrest. The case concerns the events of December 19, 2010, and searches conducted in Viasna's offices, organized shortly after the protest. These are very interesting memories, it is even more interesting for the people that took part in those events, mainly due to the unique point of view presented by Ales. He has sent me the last passages of the memories, they are now being edited and soon published, firstly online, and then, who knows, maybe in the form of a book. Currently, I expect his final opinion on the publication. Most likely, the first part of the memories will appear online on August 4 – on the second anniversary of the arrest of Ales".

The memoir is written in the Bobrujsk colony, where Ales serves his sentence.

In August 2011 Ales Bialiatski was arrested, suspected of serious tax evasion, after Lithuania and Poland had disclosed information about Belarusian individuals' bank accounts, at the request of the Belarusian authorities. Ales Bialiatski is the head of Belarus' leading human rights organisation Viasna. Since Viasna has not been able to register and operate legally in Belarus, the organisation was forced to open private bank accounts abroad. In November 2011 Ales Bialiatski was sentenced to four and a half years in prison and confiscation of property.

International human rights activists has repeatedly protested against the treatment of Belarus' political prisoners and demanded the immediate release of Ales Bialiatski.

svaboda.org

During the UN session Valentin Stefanovich reminded the Belarusian authorities of their international obligations

On June 4, deputy chairman of the Human Rights Centre VIASNA took part in an interactive discussion on the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus.

Fragments of **Valentin Stefanovich's** speech:

My name is Valentin Stefanovich; I am the Deputy Chair of the Human Right Center VIASNA. I have been leading this organization since our Chairman, Ales Bialatski, was arrested and sentenced to 4.5 years of imprisonment in a maximum security prison camp.

Human Right Center VIASNA and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) welcome the Report by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus. The human rights situation in Belarus remains as bad as ever. Civil and political rights are subject to strict limitations. A number of political prisoners remain behind bars, including the former presidential candidate at the 2010 elections Mr. Statkevich, Chairman of the Human Right Center VIASNA and Vice-president of FIDH Mr. Bialiatski and the leader of the Young Front Mr. Dashkevich.

The country continues to use capital punishment, and death sentences are being passed and carried out. Activities of unregistered NGO are criminalized, and acceptance of financial assistance from abroad is considered to be against the law in violation of the March resolution by the UN Human Rights Council.

Belarus ignores resolutions of the Human Rights Committee, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and other international bodies. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus made an official statement to the effect that no decisions by the Human Rights Committee in individual cases shall be deemed binding. No decisions by the Human Rights Committee on individual complaints have been acted upon..

This past March, in response to the decision by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in the case of Ales Bialiatski who has been incarcerated since August 2011, the Belarusian delegation made an official announcement that it would stop cooperating with this UN mechanism.

Death sentences continue to be carried out despite a number of individual appeals in such cases registered and acted upon urgently by the Human Rights Committee, of which action Belarusian authorities have been duly informed.

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